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ABSTRACT

This report is a synopsis of the formal evaluation of Project Awareness, cooperatively conducted by seven Western states and designed to help educators recognize and work effectively to eliminate sex bias in education. A major component of the project, for educators and citizens, was the development of a training program designed to increase awareness of the extent of and consequences of sex bias in education. Part of the program's purpose was to suggest techniques and change strategies for the development of educational activities to promote equal educational opportunities. Each of the seven participating states developed their own implementation and dissemination plan for using the training materials developed for the project. The data collection for evaluation of the project emphasized three components: (1) a written survey questionnaire, (2) an individual interview to explain and annotate the survey responses, and (3) a group seminar to discuss the major lessons learned about implementation. The survey questionnaires and the interviews provided basic descriptive data about the ways the project materials were used and some summary judgements about their effectiveness. The most important aim of the evaluation was to document the perceptions of the implementation process held by those who had first hand experience with managing the program. This synopsis includes the highlights of the final evaluation, as well as an overview of the evaluation methods used and an edited transcript of a seminar on the lessons learned about the process of the program's implementation. The basic theme that runs through the findings is that the most important elements of this program were human qualities such as commitment and patience. (Author/AM)

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IMPLEMENTING PROJECT AWARENESS

A Multi-State Training Program Addressing Sex Discrimination Issues in Education

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FORWARD

The following report is a synopsis of the formal evaluation of Project Awareness by C. David Veers, evaluation consultant. In the following pages, the seven state education agencies participating in Project Awareness share their experiences and insights gained over their two-year involvement in an ambitious project: the implementation of a training program designed to increase awareness of sex bias and encourage educators to initiate affirmative steps to achieve sex equity in education.

The edited comments of the Policy Committee which appear in the latter portion of the report are representative of the high level of commitment and expertise of the many people in the seven states who contributed to the gratifying experiences and impact of Project Awareness.

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The basic theme which runs through all the findings in the evaluation of Project Awareness is the firm sense that the most important ingredients in a successfully implemented training program are human qualities like commitment, understanding, patience, respect for others, humor, flexibility persistence, competence, and that "paper doesn't help people grow--people help people grow."

excerpt from Implementing Project Awareness: A Multi-State Training Program Addressing Sex Discrimination Issues in Education
by C. David Beers, Evaluation Consultant

OVERVIEW

In May of 1975, the office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction became the administrator of a seven state project entitled Project Awareness funded by Title V, Sec 505, ESEA. Project Awareness has been cooperatively conducted by the state education agencies of seven Western states -- Alaska, California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon and Washington. The project was designed to help educators recognize and work effectively to eliminate sex bias in education.

A major component of the project has been the development of a training program designed to increase the awareness of educators and citizens of the extent and consequences of sex bias in education and to suggest techniques and change strategies for the development of educational activities that promote equal educational opportunities for males and females.

Each of the seven participating states developed their own implementation and dissemination plan for using the training materials developed for Project Awareness by Feminists Northwest, a non-profit consulting firm in Seattle, Washington. The people from the various state education agencies who had direct responsibilities for carrying out these plans met together in May of 1977, near the end of the first year of implementation, to describe what had been tried, what had been accomplished, what problems were encountered and what remained to be done. This data collection emphasized three components: 1) a written survey questionnaire, 2) an individual interview to explain and annotate the survey responses, 3) a group seminar to discuss the major lessons learned about implementation in Project Awareness.

A structured survey questionnaire was mailed to each state agency before the May meeting. This survey asked for basic descriptive information about such things as the number and kinds of Project Awareness workshops given, the number and kinds of persons who attended, which sections of the training package were most frequently used, which required the most revision, etc. The survey also asked for summary judgements about such things as the overall effectiveness of the training materials, how useful the various components of the training program had been and what kinds of needs were best met by Project Awareness.

At the meeting there was the opportunity to explain and elaborate on the written survey responses in individual interview sessions. The interview explored these kinds of questions: How well do these survey responses tell the story of what happened with Project Awareness in your state? From your point of view, which are the most important items in the survey? Which are the least important? Where do the survey responses speak for themselves? Where would annotations or explanations be necessary? What important information has not been elicited by the survey?

The survey questionnaires and the accompanying interviews provide basic descriptive data about the ways Project Awareness materials were used and some summary judgements about their effectiveness. But the most important aim of the evaluation was to document the perceptions of

the implementation process held by those who had firsthand experience with managing the Project Awareness program. The key question here is, "What have you learned in Project Awareness that could be useful for others?" Various permutations of this basic question were explored in an informal open-ended seminar with the persons responsible for implementing Project Awareness in each of the participating states.

The following pages provide a synopsis of the highlights of the final evaluation report for Project Awareness. The synopsis includes an overview of the evaluation methods and results and an edited transcript of the seminar on the lessons learned about the process of implementation of a training program addressing sex bias and educational change.

The basic theme which runs through all the findings is the firm sense that the most important ingredients in a successfully implemented program like Project Awareness are human qualities like commitment, understanding, patience, respect for others, humor, flexibility, persistence, competence, and that "paper doesn't help people grow -- people help people grow."

THE SURVEY: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROJECT AWARENESS TRAINING PROGRAM

The survey questionnnaire and associated interviews provided some basic descriptive information about Project Awareness and some summary judgments about its usefulness. Selected highlights from the survey are listed here:

a) The various components of the Project Awareness program were for the most part judged to be very useful or indispensable and they would continue to be used in the future.

b) Project Awareness workshops were held in a wide variety of communities throughout the seven participating western states. Most of the workshops were conducted between January and May 1977.

c) Project Awareness has for the most part been "very effective" in meeting the needs for helping people to recognize and deal constructively with sex bias in education.

d) The seven states have duplicated about 2,000 copies of the entire Project Awareness training manual, and several hundred copies of each of the specific sections of the manual.

e) Approximately 5,000 people have attended Project Awareness workshops in 1976-77; however, since Project Awareness has been integrated into other state educational activities, it is impossible to determine an exact count.

f) People holding many different role positions have attended Project Awareness workshops. The largest proportion were instructional staff, then superintendents, Title IX coordinators and affirmative action officers and parents. Smaller proportions of many other role positions were represented at the workshops.

g) Many different reasons were cited as important for attending Project Awareness workshops. The most important reasons included the fact that their role position involved them formally in women's equity issues, their supervisors suggested they attend voluntarily, the workshop was held at an especially convenient time and place, they had a specific problem in their work which they felt the workshop would help them solve.

h) The Project Awareness workshops were conducted using many different formats. The most frequent formats were single sessions on these topics: damaging effects of sex discrimination, laws and assessment, strategies for ending sex discrimation in the schools and sessions that combine elements from different topics.

i) Project Awareness materials were designed to encourage flexibility and adaptations, and the interviews established that these qualities were major strengths of the program that contributed to successful implementation.

j) Various means were used to inform people about Project Awareness workshops. The two means of communication judged most useful were formal written announcements mailed to others personally and informal written or verbal communications by friends or colleagues.

This overview highlights the findings from this study of how the training materials developed in Project Awareness were used in the seven participating western states. The following section reports in the words of the participants themselves what has been learned about how to make training programs work.

THE SEMINAR: A CONVERSATION ABOUT MAKING TRAINING PROGRAMS WORK

Guiding Questions for Discussion

Imagine that a person comes to you who is about to begin a job with similar responsibilities to yours, or imagine you have been promoted and this person is going to be your replacement. This person asks for your advice about how to carry out effectively a training program like Project Awareness. Based on your experience, what could you say about things to try because they have worked well for you, or things to avoid because you tried them and they didn't work, or things which might be tried that you've thought about.

This question sets the stage for the conversation. Other related questions were used at different times through the course of the conversation to help stimulate further elaboration of key points, to refocus the discussion, etc. These are examples of probing questions:

What elements could be taken away from Project Awareness and yet retain a viable educational program? What are the key features, the essential features in a plan to disseminate a training program like Project Awareness?

What are the critical incidents, the major decision points that influence the implementation process? What needs to happen first, second, third, etc?

What is the "natural history" of the change process?

If you were to manage a program like Project Awareness in a new state:

What conditions would you consider essential for successful implementation?

What conditions would you consider facilitating, but not essential?

What conditions would you consider a hinderance, an obstacle to implementation?

What conditions would be certain to cause failure?

When asked to give a brief description of Project Awareness by someone unfamiliar with it:

What features of the program do you talk about?

What analogies do you use?

What stories do you tell?

What diagrams do you draw?

What do you feel is most important to communicate about Project Awareness?

SEX EQUITY SHOULD BE PERCEIVED AS A LOCAL PRIORITY . . .

If I had five minutes to outline for someone else what we have tried to do in this state to create awareness of sex bias in education, it would go something like this: A key point is to look into your state constitution -- and beyond that into the tradition of settlement in your area -- for common strands of concern with human rights, educational opportunity and so forth that can be carried over into the current federal definition of sex equity in education. Once you have done the research on basic state policy and local traditions, you go to the leadership, like the state board of education and the state superintendent of instruction, and try to get them to issue a policy statement that you can use to help introduce the idea of sex equity to others. This kind of administrative support is important, and it is important that sex equity be perceived as a local priority rather than just another federal requirement imposed from the outside.

SET UP A NETWORK OF PEOPLE . . .

Then go to your own state educational agency and start training these people to be sensitive to sexual stereotyping so that in the course of carrying out their regular duties they become a kind of field staff promoting sex equity. Try to find one or two persons from the agency who have a long history of respect in the state and who are basically sensitive to the issues and travel with them to the local districts to gain entre' and credibility. On these trips work to set up a state-wide network of people concerned with sex equity issues, from formally designated Title IX coordinators to interested parents. This means having a good system for communication, right down to getting address labels for everyone so that when something needs to be mailed out it gets going immediately and having ready telephone access, such as a "hot line" if possible.

YOU CAN'T PREPACKAGE PROGRAMS . . .

The next step is to work with organizations concerned with various aspects of education in your state, such as school boards, associations for teachers, administrators, guidance people, parents and so forth. You try to tailor your message to each organization's particular role and resources -- you try to be flexible enough so that each group can hear the message. In other words, I don't think you can completely prepackage anything. You can have a core set of materials and presentation techniques, but in order to tailor your message to each audience I think you have to be as aware as possible of what their real lives consist of so that you can illustrate your points with concrete examples from their experience so that they can recognize the way in which what you are saying affects them and their children on a day to day basis. One of the real values of Project Awareness is the fact that a lot of good stuff is there which we didn't have to pull together ourselves, but we also did not have to buy into a predetermined package, one that we have to sign in life blood to use -- "the whole thing and nothing but the thing so help us God". We have been allowed the flexibility to pick and choose, and I really appreciate that. One of our responsibilities in Project Awareness has been to choose from that wealth and this has been most useful in our situation.

MATERIALS NEED TO BE ADAPTABLE . . .

I think an important practical problem has been brought up here: How do you deal with the different expectations of people who come to the Project Awareness workshops? Some people want to just discuss their own specific cases. The point is that if you are going to write materials for a purpose like promoting awareness of sex bias in education, you better write into that whole system the freedom to adapt and adjust and use those materials in any way that you want to.

WHERE DO WE START -- TOP OR BOTTOM ? . .

When you look at it this way, it occurs to me that maybe our whole approach to this project was wrong because we started to work at the top with the expectation that it would get back to the bottom of the educational ladder. Maybe, if we had started at the bottom, it would have reached up to the top a lot faster.

Another thing I found out in Project Awareness-- when you invite superintendents to your workshops, they come not because they are interested in morality, but because they are interested in law. They would come in and sit down and listen to the legal aspects and then they would get up and walk out. And the teachers ask themselves, "what kind of a commitment is that"? The superintendents don't even have the courtesy to stay and listen to what is going on. I think this kind of abominable bureaucracy defeats the thing; at least, it makes the job harder. And I didn't have enough guts to say: "Hey, sit down, you haven't heard it all yet". I didn't have the guts to do that and I should have.

START WITH DECISION MAKERS . . .

Let me speak on this topic about who you focus on in order to enact change. You are only raising the frustration level if at first you go into work with teachers because if the commitment from the power level has not been made, then there will not be follow-up action. People tend to say, "we will wait until we are pressed against the wall, then we will learn about the sex discrimination law". So our strategy for implementing change is this: first you deal with school boards, superintendents, principals and central office people to communicate a cognitive knowledge regarding the law and a level of awareness about the issues. Once the power level has made a commitment to implementation of the law, you can stretch out to reach others. You need to realize that you can't work effectively with the shotgun approach, you can't do all things at one time. You need to work with a three-point program. The first deals with awareness, the second with consideration of possible alternatives, the third with specific application and internalization. If you give this sort of orientation to workshop participants initially, they don't go on thinking that they can have all the answers to all the questions in the first shot.

ENCOURAGE MIXED TEAMS . . .

It is hard to work from a state agency where you can't always identify the kinds of people you want for the workshops. Ideally, I think mixed teams from each district is the best way. When you get in touch with the district, ask them to please try to get representation from different parts of your school operation and from different parts of your community. You want them to get involved in a process that identifies people from administration, from teaching, from counseling, and from citizen groups. We need to find better ways to work on getting mixed teams, for they don't seem to happen automatically.

ENCOURAGE PARENTS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS . . .

In one workshop we did have some parents participating, which was excellent because they provided a reality check for the school principals who were sometimes tempted to say things which were not true. The presence of the parents changed the whole tone of the workshop. There were three parents and more than thirty educators, but they had an impact on the effectiveness of the workshops.

I feel that it is important for the workshop organizers to not only work with outside community groups, but to get a variety of community people into the workshops with the educators. Districts seem to find it hard to locate community people -- they will say, "Well, we tried, but we couldn't find anybody". Or they find people who are so closely identified with the school that their participation has no effect at all.

ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO ADVOCATE . . .

Some school districts in our state are working with another strategy for developing school policy. Students are using the handbooks prepared by the Resource Center entitled The Student Guide to Title IX, by Myra Sadker, (published by The Resource Center on Sex Roles in Education, National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, Washington D.C., 1977) in student council groups and social studies classes. The kids are working through the issues and data collection activities with the intention of making presentations to their own school boards. They are beginning to work on the parents in the communities and some parents are tuning in to the sex bias issues through their kids, especially in some areas where customs and values are so different.

EFFECTIVE TRAINERS NEED MORE THAN AWARENESS . . .

A relevant issue has been brought up here. The people who come to Project Awareness as trainees are expected to go back to their local communities to serve as trainers. In our workshops, we have to not only meet their expectations as trainees, but we need to help them get ready to meet the expectations of other people that they in turn will be training. One thing we need to be aware of is to select workshop participants who have previous experience and who have developed skills in their own right as trainers. All the information and skills a person needs to have as a trainer from A to Z cannot be fit into one three-ring binder as can the Project Awareness materials.

YOU NEED A TURTLE SHELL TO DEAL WITH HOSTILITY . . .

Those of us who have been involved with these kinds of issues as trainers have developed a turtle shell. Some of the people who have come to our workshops may only have an egg shell. If they have never before dealt with this kind of controversy and hostility, then they are not about to go out to use those workshop materials, no matter how much time you may try to spend on "communication skills" in the three-day workshop. You just stand up there naked to the wind if you don't believe in what you are dealing with and you don't have the experience and strategy for dealing with hostility. On the other hand, I have found that most people who had previous experience as trainers do feel comfortable with the kind of preparation Project Awareness provides.

A SENSE OF HUMOR IS CRITICAL . . .

And one last important ingredient -- a sense of humor. Anyone who does not have a sense of humor, in my opinion, is not going to get to first base in this kind of work. I think if you take yourself or any of your work too seriously you might as well hang it up. That's not very profound, but it sure is real. A sense of humor is critical. I would say it is more critical than always having the latest information. Really, you can always say "no, I don't know that;" and I would encourage saying "I don't know" because most other people don't know everything either, so that puts you on the same plane as they are -- you are an ordinary person trying to do a good job rather than some kind of "expert".

SOME REAL HOSTILITIES ARE GOING TO BE SHARED . . .

I would strongly advise that anyone with a sensitive stomach not get into this kind of work because people are going to share some real hostilities with you. You have to understand that they are not being personal, but they are reacting out of their own experience and background. That's why it is so important to be able to remind them of their background by pointing to things that are happening right now in their daily lives. What you are trying to do is teach--and any good teacher tries to do this -- to keep it as indigenious as possible. And you have to deliberately prepare yourself for this; for example, in many communities you get an argument about what the Bible said about men and women and you want to know enough to be able to hold your own. Whether we like it or not that is where those people are and if we are going to help them change, we have to start and work with what they believe is important.

Many people, not just those in conservative communities, have fears about the disintegration of the family, and I think we have to be able to show that what we are talking about should, in fact, improve the quality of family life.

DO WE EMPHASIZE IN-SERVICE EDUCATION OR PRE-SERVICE EDUCATION? . . .

At a state department of education, we find ourselves spending a lot of time retraining the people that colleges haven't trained very well. One of the things we have succeeded in doing is getting some of the colleges to use the Project Awareness materials in summer classes for teachers and hopefully, some of the materials will be used in courses for undergraduates. To go on forever doing in-service education in this area without having impact on pre-service education is pointless.

In-service education is the logical place to focus our attention now because we have such limited numbers of young people coming into the profession. You're not going to make a big change by getting to the new ones coming into teaching because those numbers are dwindling.

One consideration is to see that teachers have opportunities for training in this area of sex bias in education. For this to happen, it's important for educators at all levels to be aware of the issues so that there is support within the structure for this kind of teacher training. In-service education still is not a school system priority -- it is considered an extra voluntary activity that most districts don't get involved in unless it's an absolute necessity.

In Project Awareness, we've had some experiences with a form of in-service education funded with very limited resources which seems to be having large impact. Colleges of education have had relatively large amounts of resources targeted on preservice education which has not had much impact. At least you hear criticisms from many teachers who say that what they learned as students in college did not prepare them very well for what they encounter as teachers in public schools. One of the recommendations that may grow out of this project might deal with the issue of taking some of the resources presently devoted to preservice education and reassigning them to the kind of in-service education we have experienced within Project Awareness.

PROJECT AWARENESS IS A WAY TO GET STARTED . . .

I view what we have done in Project Awareness as an initial step of implementation. I don't think this project was designed to accomplish everything that is needed in this area. Basically this project was designed to give the various states some impetus -- a way to get started.

I would agree from my experience that the payoff from this kind of project is going to be spread out over time; you are not going to see immediate dramatic results. The longer the time you press forward on these issues the larger the eventual payoff. In the Project Awareness workshops, I think you do something like introducing exotic bacteria into a sterile laboratory; you will never again have the old monolithic attitudes about sex-role stereotypes.

GUARD AGAINST OVER-OPTIMISM . . .

I think we should guard against over-optimism; one of the worst mistakes that we make in education programs is to think that everything has to be accomplished in one single year -- everything is a short term project and then it's terminated. This is why I say Project Awareness is only part of a long-term, large scale social revolution that started years ago. We are just beginning to recognize men and women as being equal.

It's like if we want to change the shape of the water, we have to pour it into a container with a different shape. In education what is needed now is to change the nature of the container and then some of these things we want would be possible. Right now, I think there is a limited amount you can do because of the nature of the organizational system. The basic structure, the dynamics of the thing, work against you.

DON'T EXPECT EVERYTHING TO HAPPEN OVERNIGHT . . .

One thing I have to keep reminding myself of is that this is a spearhead; it's the beginning of a ten to twenty year project. This is part of a major sociological change so don't expect everything to happen overnight. But we are making a thrust, we are spreading information and training teams who can work within their districts. You could be pessimistic about how effective those teams are going to be in the district. If we don't go back next year and coach them a bit more and encourage them, other things are going to come up and they are going to have other priorities.

That's an important point to make for policy makers and for those who are responsible for funding proposals. We have here a chance to talk about some of the down-to-earth human things about understanding the change process from the point of view of people who have actually been through it. The original proposal for Project Awareness had some grand sounding goals, but let's not believe that we have licked everything with this project. And let's not be too broken-hearted because we haven't done it all in a year. Did we accomplish all our objectives in a year? No, that's impossible. But on the other hand, I think we have made twice as much progress, maybe three or four times as much as we had any reason to expect. I try to remember that you can only lead others to the threshhold of their own minds. It may take three years or ten years for some of these people to recognize that they have changed their own minds.

PAPER DOESN'T HELP PEOPLE GROW - PEOPLE HELP PEOPLE GROW . . .

You know, in all of this we have got to remember that we are talking about human beings, and we have to pay some money for people to have the time to help each other grow. If the U.S. Office of Education really cares about serving citizens and students rather than serving itself, to be perfectly blunt, then it has got to recognize that. For the U.S.O.E. to pay for pieces of paper may make it possible to have a good ledger at the end of the year, but paper doesn't help people grow; people help people grow. By letting people make decisions about what materials they will use, by making it possible for them to earn money while they are sitting and talking with other people about how to use those materials, by encouraging people to adapt and adjust training materials to their own local circumstances, in these ways it is possible to get more mileage from the dollar in the long run. I think the trick will be to find out how to put unit pricing on these processes like Safeway does with groceries: one ounce of something costs so many cents. Cost accountability and cost effective reporting are much talked about now, and I agree with most of it, but whoever invents a way to translate human interaction into cost effectiveness is going to be a genius or a millionaire.

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